

Strategic Plan for Ashland Watershed Trails

VISION

“Providing safe, enjoyable, family-oriented trail opportunities that meet a wide variety of user needs while protecting sensitive resources in a sustainable way.”

The Coalition should develop a vision statement, similar to that above, in coordination with the Forest Service. The vision statement should be fairly short, clear, and addresses what you are trying to accomplish as well as the constraints under which you are working. An additional explanatory paragraph can be added but it is nice to have a vision statement that is repeatable and can be put on brochures, websites without being overly wordy.

LONG-TERM GOALS

Long Term Goals should be measurable and meaningful. They should be needed in order to reach the desired future condition for the Ashland trail system. Using every opportunity to inform the public of the goals in an understandable way will only lead to greater support and more success in achieving goals. The goals will guide where, when, and how to focus efforts. Measurable goals will be easy to track and you will know when they are attained. By identifying areas of focus efforts will be more efficient and lead to better decisions.

Develop a list of relevant, ongoing, planning efforts to ensure Trails are considered in all relevant plans and documents produced both by Forest Service or the Community of Ashland.

- Watershed integration
- Ashland Resiliency Plan (ARP)
- Forest and Land Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) for Siskiyou National Forest
- Ashland City Trails Plan
- Proposed Ski Area Expansion
- University (Resource Education)

Develop and identify key issues regarding trails in coordination with all interested individuals, groups and agencies including: Forest Service, City of Ashland, Trails Coalition and others identified as key groups in the communications plan

- Water quality (sanitation)
- Resource Protection issues including: Threatened and Endangered Species (TES), Research Natural Area (RNA)
- Safety – emergency response, traffic safety, search and rescue
- User conflicts – signing
- Ski Area management plans/operations plans
- Trails – recreational resource sustainability

- Volunteer coordination, training, management

Develop a list of funding needs and possible sources for those funds. Include needs for all elements of the trail system.

- Non profit 501C3 provides general direction for oversight of grants funds
- Identify funding needs for first five years and continue to plan at five year intervals (or other time frame as specified)
- Identify a wide variety of potential sources of funding/ grant programs including: educational/conservation education, technical, resource protection, safety, corporate grants, recreational trail programs funded the fuel sales tax (?), National Forest Foundation grants for building consensus among diverse National Forest communities
- Develop working relationship with entities providing grants and continue to strengthen relationships over time
- Membership dues in Trails Coalition could be a source for funding special projects
- Forest Service should support grant writing efforts through letters of support, grant writing or other assistance as needed

Develop a Communication Plan incorporating key stakeholders, key messages, and identify annual program of work to get the message out (key messages should be identified).

- Identify key messages for the trails system – benefits of trails, importance of staying on designated trails, positive messages for various trail use groups
- Identify key partners in getting out the message including: bike shops, Chambers of Commerce, Forest Service, Ski Area, businesses that directly support trail users, and/or others as identified.
- Work with Partners to offer “Hospitality Training” or other form of information/support to locals that visitors first meet on arrival to the area. Target front desk clerks at hotels, bike shop owners, or others identified as persons who could spread the word regarding trail opportunities, proper use of trails, volunteer opportunities
- List special event days in communication plan and focus efforts on these. Include Forest Service special days such as National Trails Day (first Saturday in June), Veterans day or others as identified
- Engage users in community awareness regarding bicycling, or other trail uses not generally (or poorly) understood by public, or those identified under key messages. This could be a simple activity in the square or other venue where users show bicycles, safety gear, riding techniques, trail etiquette to reduce user conflicts, Leave No Trace Ethics/land stewardship ethics, to introduce the community to positive aspects of the sport of bicycling.
- Partner with Forest Service or others to provide trail users information regarding key resources, resource protection standards to which the Forest Service is held (Clean Water Act, archeology, soils, endangered species, and others as identified)
- List ways to get the message out that will reach the most people, be cost efficient, be relevant including: maps, brochures, signs, events/activities, or a DVD to tell the story
- Media management – list talking points for various issues, review media appearances and make recommendations to further improve future efforts

Develop a Volunteer Operations Plan in partnership with the Forest Service and/or others to guide volunteer efforts, outline volunteer training goals, and provide annual schedule of volunteer days/events

- Establish a task group to develop an annual list of volunteer needs. Initially this will most likely involve basic training of volunteers/partners/FS employees to understand Forest Service requirements for planning, design, layout of a designated system for Ashland Watershed (Trails Unlimited – Trail Planning, Design, and Layout).
- Develop a volunteer plan that includes and annual plan of work for the following: specific volunteer days or events for the year, training needs and scheduling (timing, funding), rewards/recognition such as T-shirts, equipments and safety gear needs and possible funding sources for these

Develop a list of the benefits of trails to users, the community, and the Forest Service. Identify benefits and communicate these to key groups at every opportunity

- Activities for youth
- Healthy outdoor pursuits
- Improved Quality of Life
- Being with Family or being in a group
- Education/ conservation education
- Interpretive messages (resource protection, endangered species, clean water)
- Improved Tourism – lodging, food services
- Community Groups – Lions Club ...
- Economic Development - Bike/Running and other Trail User support Businesses

TARGET USERS, PARTNERS, GROUPS

Develop a list of stakeholders - Identify user groups, interested parties, in a very broad sense to network their cause and to bring the message of trails to the people

- Local Businesses that directly and indirectly support trails- bike shops, shuttle providers, ski resort, support activities, restaurants, hotels
- Ski Area - many opportunities exist to expand services
- Community – Civic groups, Rotary Club, Lions Club, mayors office
- Youth Groups – Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club
- Tourism – Chamber of Commerce
- Educational Institutions- local University, High Schools
- User Groups – Hikers, walkers, dog walkers, bike riders, cross country bicyclists, down hill riders

ASHLANDS ROLE IN WHAT OTHERS ARE PROVIDING

The Ashland Watershed Trails play an important role in providing safe recreation opportunities that engage users, protect resources, and are sustainable. No one aspect of the entire Ashland package can stand alone. Each plays an important part in the whole.

The trails coalition should tier their efforts to ongoing forest service planning / watershed planning efforts. In this way they can begin to understand the context within which the trail system must function and they can begin to bring the message of how trails fit into the other ongoing forest efforts. Trail coalition representatives should attend local community meetings and explain the benefits of a state-of-the-art sustainable trail system. The benefits include everything from improved health and quality of life to improved tourism and benefits to businesses that directly and indirectly support trail users. Many health and safety benefits occur to the youth; a highly important group for the continued future of the trail system. By involving youth and youth groups the future continuity of sustainable trails is ensured. These trail systems play an important role in the Ashland Community for visitors coming for the renowned Shakespeare Festivals and want family outdoor activities when not watching the festivals. Tourists to Ashland want the whole package. If these support activities did not exist Ashland would be a much less spectacular place for tourists to visit. The benefits of a state-of-the-art trails system include improved tourism, improved quality of life for residents, and the protection of a priceless watershed.